



TOWN OF TEWKSBURY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes April 8, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by David Gay at the Pike House (temporary Town Hall). Present were David Plunkett, Chairman, (late arrival), Brian Linder, Patricia Lelos, Michael Monahan, Marko Duffy, Larry Sanford, Steve Sadwick, Director of Community Development, and Richard Montuori, Town Manager.

Approval of meeting minutes – February 11, 2014 and March 4, 2014

MOTION: Mr. Sanford made the motion to approve the February 11, 2014 meeting minutes; seconded by Mr. Linder and the motion carried 3-0-2.

MOTION: Mr. Monahan made the motion to approve the March 4, 2014 meeting minutes; seconded by Mr. Sanford and the motion carried 5-0.

A) Economic Development Assistance Beverly Woods, NMCOG

Present were Beverly Woods and Jay Donovan from Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG). Ms. Woods explained that NMCOG is the regional planning agency for Greater Lowell and they cover nine communities; including Tewksbury. The Committee requested NMCOG come tonight to discuss the types of things they do for economic development, how they have worked with Tewksbury in the past, and what they can do for Tewksbury in the future. Ms. Woods explained that Mr. Donovan has been working with Tewksbury on economic development and helped set up the Economic Development Committee.

6:10 p.m. Mr. Plunkett arrived.

Mr. Donovan explained that NMCOG receives funding from the Economic Development Administration to implement economic planning for the region. NMCOG is required to establish a plan every 5 years as well as provide annual updates of the plan. Mr. Donovan provided the members with a document and explained that the document outlines different economic development strategies for the region and looks at the entire area. Mr. Donovan noted that additional funds will be applied for this year.

Ms. Woods noted that another project that has been worked on is utilizing District Local Technical Assistance funds to work with Northeastern University to determine ways of obtaining feedback on the community in the form of surveys, etc. The feedback received will help to address the strengths and weaknesses of the community. Mr. Donovan noted NMCOG would also like to prepare an economic development section of the master plan and that they are currently working on economic development strategies for Dracut and Billerica.

Ms. Woods noted that a study on Route 38 has been completed and they will be presenting their findings at the Board of Selectmen meeting tonight.

Ms. Woods reviewed some of the other items NMCOG has helped Tewksbury with including the Housing Production Plan, Open Space Plan, etc. and noted that NMCOG will continue to try to help Tewksbury in any way they can.

Discussion took place on the surveys that have been done in other communities. Ms. Woods noted that Chelmsford sent a survey to all of the businesses along Route 129 to determine what their needs are.

Mr. Gay discussed the Economic Target Area (ETA) designation and asked if any of the other communities have been designated an ETA and if they are active. Mr. Donovan explained that most of the communities they work with are ETA's and are active. Discussion took place on ways for Tewksbury to be more active and bringing in new businesses. Mr. Plunkett discussed specifying a small section of Route 38 for development rather than the entire Route 38 corridor and expanding the area in the future as needed.

Discussion took place on the Transportation Bond Bill. Ms. Woods explained that every year the State issues a transportation bond which gives the State transportation agency spending authority up to a certain amount. The projects contained within the bond bill exceed the amount of funding available. Mr. Sanford asked if Route 38 is one of the projects on the bill and Ms. Woods confirmed this. Mr. Montuori reviewed the other projects in Tewksbury on the bond bill list including Shawsheen Street to Chandler, Town Center, etc. Discussion took place on how these projects can be addressed since it is likely the funding will never be received. Mr. Montuori noted that the State currently has a plan to address Route 38 from Pike Street to Route 495.

Mr. Sadwick asked if any other communities have active business organizations and Ms. Woods noted that Chelmsford and Westford have active Economic Development Committees. Ms. Woods will provide the Committee with a copy of Westford's brochure. Mr. Donovan noted that Westford's brochure was sponsored by the local businesses. Ms. Lelos asked how much the businesses contributed to the brochure and Ms. Woods noted that she will obtain this information.

Mr. Monahan suggested working on updating the town's website, creating a brochure, and fixing some of the roads as some possible items to focus on.

Ms. Woods explained that Chelmsford also maintains a database of all of its vacant parcels and uses that as a marketing tool. The State also has a statewide database of sites for when businesses are seeking out potential locations and they will contact the communities that have sites that meet the specifications.

Mr. Sadwick explained that a lot of economic development has to do with the quality of life of the community. Locally, there are complaints about water and sewer rates, politicians, slot parlor proposal, etc. All of which is negative press that the town has generated upon itself and likely appears to businesses that there are issues internally. Mr. suggested putting out press releases after projects like the slot parlor proposal stating what's next for the property and providing information on the property so that is also found when research is done on the town by a potential business. Ms. Lelos discussed the negativity within the town and her desire to help promote the town on a more positive level. Discussion took place on marketing.

Ms. Woods and Mr. Donovan left.

B) Update on Development Activity

Mr. Sadwick noted that the Planning Board has a number of zoning articles going before town meeting; many of which are being privately submitted. One of these articles seeks to expand the interstate overlay district which would bring it to the 495 Route 38 Interchange down to Wal-Mart. The Planning Board has voted a favorable recommendation on this. There is also an article seeking to change a parcel of land along Livingston Street from Commercial to Heavy Industrial. Mr. Sadwick explained that the area was originally heavy industrial and Marc Ginsburg had previously proposed a subdivision and had the zoning changed from Heavy Industrial to Residential. The subdivision was never done and Arnie Martel is now proposing to change the area back to Heavy Industrial. Discussion took place on what constitutes heavy industrial and Mr. Sadwick explained that in this case it would likely be a contractor's yard and possibly industrial condominiums.

Mr. Sadwick noted that he and Mr. Montuori have met with at least three different potential buyers of the Motel Caswell. Some of the potential uses discussed to date have been housing, mixed use, and retail.

Mr. Sadwick explained that two meetings with Lowell Junction have occurred within the last two weeks regarding their potential purchasing of the Simon property. Mr. Sadwick noted that there can be no Commercial use without an interchange and the potential buyers have been made aware of this.

Mr. Sadwick noted that the owners of 1 Radcliff Road will be before the Planning Board seeking an expansion of their parking lot. The site is 140,000 square feet with 400 parking spaces. The owners are looking to increase the parking by an additional 200 spaces and have not disclosed if they have a potential tenant; however, they have stated that it is for marketing purposes. Mr. Sadwick noted that there has been no recent activity on 3 Radcliff.

Old Business

There was no old business.

New Business

The next meeting has been scheduled for Wednesday, May 14, 2014.

Adjourn.

MOTION: Mr. Gay made the motion to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Sanford and the motion carried 5-0.

Approved: 5/14/14

No documents submitted for 4/8/14 Agenda